

BREAKING NEWS

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Another rare 'sea monster' lands in California: a 15-foot saber-toothed whale

By **Michael Martinez**, CNN
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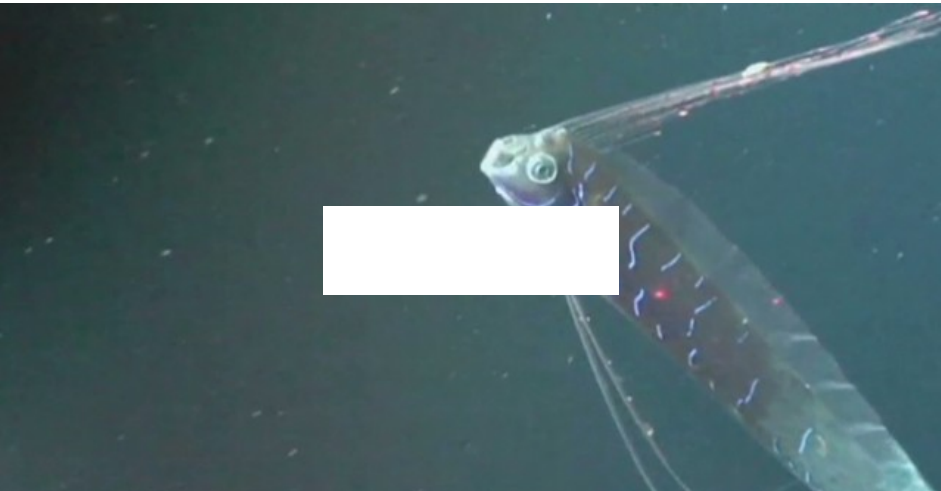
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Bizarre creatures mysteriously wash up

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

A saber-toothed whale from the Alaskan deep sea washes ashore in Los Angeles

Its carcass is intact, giving tourists at Venice Beach and scientists a rare sighting

Earlier this week, a rare orca that was 18 feet long is found at a coastal island

Scientists can't say whether the rare animals' strandings are because of global warming



Los Angeles (CNN) -- Oh, Jules Verne or Peter Benchley, where are you, great writers of deep-sea monsters?

For the second time this week, Southern California has seen a rare sea beast washed ashore, far from home waters.

This time, it's a saber-toothed whale, better known to live in deep Alaskan waters than in the warm surf of tourist-choked Venice Beach in Los Angeles where it stranded Wednesday.

In an extraordinary way even for scientists, the carcass of the nearly 15-foot and 2,000-pound whale was intact -- except for a couple of fresh bite marks from sharks. The whale, a female, apparently was barely alive when it came ashore -- a highly unusual sight because beached whales are often badly decomposed or badly eaten by marine life, a local biologist said.

"It was really humbling and sad to see such a majestic creature stranded this way," said Heather Doyle, director of the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. She rushed down the beach on her bicycle to witness the rarely-seen animal after staff naturalist Brittany Corona happened upon a crowd surrounding the whale on the sand.

Such a sighting of the whale up close in California "is a once in a lifetime opportunity," she added.

[Giant eyeball washes up on beach](#)

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Just three days earlier, another rarely observed species -- a sea-serpent-like animal called an [oarfish](#) -- was discovered dead at Catalina Island off the Los Angeles coast.

Oarfish hide in the deep ocean. The one found in the island's Toyon Bay was so big -- 18 feet long -- that it required 15 people to hold it chest-high in a trophy photo taken by the Catalina Island Marine Institute.

"They're so rare and unusual looking," Jim Dines of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles said of the oarfish and the saber-toothed whale. "They are like sea monsters, and people really pick up on that."

Are their deaths freak events prompted by global warming?

"I think it's just really a coincidence," Dines said. "It's too early to tell. If we were to see a whole bunch of these animal strandings, that would give more evidence of something going on."

Added marine biologist Jose Bacallao of the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium: "I'm not going to speculate on any wackiness, but I will say you have years of temperature changes and we have had warmer waters.... I'm not saying the water temperature brought that whale or the oarfish here, but it's still a pretty amazing sight to see."

Dine is also a mammalogist who performed a necropsy on the whale shortly after it was found Wednesday. His examination showed no signs of trauma such as being hit by a ship and no signs of disease or parasites, Dine said.

The female whale also didn't have any food in her stomach -- aside from ingested plastic or nylon that wasn't enough to kill her, Dine said.

The carcass did show two or three fresh wounds from cookie-cutter sharks, whose name comes from how their bites leave a round wound that cuts through skin, blubber and muscle, Dines said. But those bites weren't mortal wounds, he said. In fact, the whale had several dozen scars from such bites, which are common in the species, he added.

Dines is waiting on testing results of tissue samples to determine a cause of death.

Though the animal's death is unfortunate, scientists such as Dines are excited about its discovery because so little is known about the deep-water animal that lives in the north Pacific. Its strandings typically occur in Alaska or Japan. Its last stranding in southern California was 15 years ago, Dines said.

"There is some speculation that they do migrate in the winter, but it's not certain how far (south) they go," Dines said.

It's the adult male whale that grows sabertooth-like teeth, used for combat against other males for dominance in breeding, Dines said. The females don't grow the sabertooth. The species is also known as the Stejneger's beaked whale. As a whole, the front of the species' face resembles a goose beak, Dines said.

"It's creating a lot of excitement in the media and the public, but the scientists are just as excited about this because it's a rare opportunity to study the natural history of these kinds of animals that are so rarely observed, even by marine specialists," Dines said.

[Discovery makes a splash: The rarest whale](#)

Though the plastic found in the whale's stomach didn't cause its death, the material's presence in marine life is a growing concern.

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"Certainly, pollution of plastics in the ocean is a huge concern and causes I don't know the number of deaths of marine animals," Dines said.

The discovery of the two animals also occurred as Manhattan Beach paddle-boarder Mark Durand captured on his helmet camera a video of an 8-foot great white shark swimming underneath him and grazing his board this week.

The series of events has heightened public interest in what lurks within Los Angeles' coastal waters, scientists said in interviews Thursday.

What now becomes of the two magnificent sea monsters?

Dines took several tissue samples of the whale, and its skeleton will be placed in the museum's collection of 4,000 marine specimens, used for research and exhibition, he said. The 15-foot-long whale is just a little bit short of the 18 feet common for females in the species.

As for the oarfish, its 18-foot length was too big for one freezer, so scientists cut it up into small pieces and froze them, said Jeff Chace, program director of Catalina Island Marine Institute.

Researchers will later boil off the flesh and reconstruct the skeleton, using photographs taken during the dissection of the deep-sea serpent.

[Study: Spiders had ancient big-clawed relatives](#)

CNN's Casey Wian, Jack Hannah and Dottie Evans contributed to this report.

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102 ^ | 2 ▾ Reply Share ›



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46 ^ | 2 ▾ Reply Share ›



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MMmmmm....sea bacon

34 ^ | 1 ▾ Reply Share ›



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no thats a narwhal

5 ^ | 3 ▾ Reply Share ›



Carlos Danger → brayden maine • a day ago

Silly human...those are unicorns!

12 ^ | 1 ▾ Reply Share ›



sideofbacon → Carlos Danger • 4 hours ago

unicorns are just anorexic rhinos.

1 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Sam → Carlos Danger • 8 hours ago

Unicorns... of the sea :)

1 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Deuces Wild → Carlos Danger • 13 hours ago

"It has feet like a duck but its furry!"

1 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



RockInD → Carlos Danger • 5 hours ago

Tastes like chicken!

1 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Bob Jones → NSA Hackme • 10 hours ago

failed photo

10 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



g.o → NSA Hackme • 11 hours ago

Dolfig

5 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Robert Cartilla Villafior → g.o • 7 hours ago

I'm allergic to fig

2 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Nessa Carolina Guzmán Rivera → NSA Hackme • 8 hours ago

dolpig? xD

3 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



Sean Acolor → Nessa Carolina Guzmán Rivera • 6 hours ago

manbearpig

4 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Linzi Rae Smith → NSAHackme • 11 hours ago

I thought the same thing!!!

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



drollnation.com → NSAHackme • 4 hours ago

Munster? Pffft.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Oogrol Adams → NSAHackme • 5 hours ago

Its a pholphin, which is a dolphin with the meat of a pig you dulltard

^ | v Reply Share ›



wnodles → NSAHackme • 12 hours ago

SB

^ | v Reply Share ›



Teddy Shart • a day ago

It is sad to see such a great animal like this beached.

53 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



1cynicaldude → Teddy Shart • 20 hours ago

Its the ocean, stuff dies there too just like on land

30 ^ | 2 v Reply Share ›



Enki → 1cynicaldude • 7 hours ago

Well the Sad thing is Our Species Did this...Deep Sea Sonar Experimentation by the navy and Extreme Radiation Poisoning Does some Messed up things to living creatures....

8 ^ | 2 v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → 1cynicaldude • 7 hours ago

so whats your point? that things die so its not sad? you seem to be clueless.

2 ^ | 3 v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 7 hours ago

Yes, I shall mourn everything that dies, ants, flies, roaches. I'm gently weeping for the spider I squashed as I type.

9 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

why would you kill a spider? oh because your a Fool.

2 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 6 hours ago

And I left his dead carcass on the wall as a warning to the other spiders. I couldn't find the hairspray quick enough, its awesome when they freeze in place. Makes squashing easier. So its quite the SPLAT!!

3 ^ | v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

save the Roach kill the Spider.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 3 hours ago

Hell no. They met a worse death, but in the end they won and I moved. Roachs are no joke. I hate them worse then spiders, spray em with dish soap and they suffocate slowly. Just as they should.

^ | v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

Only a Fool would Link a Whale to a Roach. at least you got a Laugh out of me. thanks for your foolish thinking.

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 6 hours ago

Why are you hating on roaches? Everything is special in it's on way. Just like you. :)

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

I don't hate anything.

^ | v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

Your clueless also.

I bet you get a lot of headaches too.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 3 hours ago

Nope no headaches! Maybe because I accept things die.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Jamie → King Kravan Chris • 6 hours ago

Thank YOU for the laugh! You were so annoyed you had to reply twice!

^ | v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Jamie • 6 hours ago

3 now 4

2 ^ | v Reply Share ›



wildbirds → Teddy Shart • 20 hours ago

All animals are great Teddy.

9 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Bob Jones → Teddy Shart • 10 hours ago

life on earth dies eventually.

3 ^ | 2 v Reply Share ›



King Kravan Chris → Bob Jones • 7 hours ago

and whats your point? oh you have none.

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Richard Gozinia • a day ago

I live in western New York. Carribean sea birds were spotted on the shore of lake Erie for the first time in history. This type of thing precedes large natural disasters that disrupt the earths magnetic field.

33 ^ | 4 v Reply Share ›



Ez9246 → Richard Gozinia • a day ago

Ocean

temperatures are changing due to warming. Currents are changing. Trash has been found on the ocean floor in some of the deepest spots. Islands off trash float in the ocean. It's all going to catch up to us very soon.

43 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



Sour kraut → Ez9246 • a day ago

Soon is now.

32 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Ez9246 → Sour kraut • a day ago

Yes, I didn't even mention the extreme over fishing and other forms of pollution killing sea life.

23 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Sour kraut → Ez9246 • a day ago

Humans will eat everything edible. And someday the world will be covered with cement.

14 ^ | 2 v Reply Share ›



Chris J → Sour kraut • 10 hours ago

And then we'll die off from something awful, and bacteria will evolve again into new life, and we'll have a new chapter of Earth's history. Human extinction just paves the way for new species and something just as amazing, if not better, could rise from the ashes.

7 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Bob Jones → Chris J • 10 hours ago

insects never die

^ | 2 v Reply Share ›



Tom → Bob Jones • 5 hours ago

Please let this be the least intelligent thing I read today.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Reason38 → Sour kraut • a day ago

its funny cause its true.

7 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



keepanopenmind → Sour kraut • 18 hours ago

We will go extinct before we can cover the world in cement and bitumul.

5 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



Bob Jones → Sour kraut • 10 hours ago

so why did one of these strand 15 years ago?

"Its last stranding in southern California was 15 years ago, Dines said."

4 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Carpe Pectora → Bob Jones • 10 hours ago

That one was caused by global cooling.

6 ^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



Reason38 → Sour kraut • a day ago

Love that Smiths song

 love that Simms song.

3 ^ | v Reply Share ›

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